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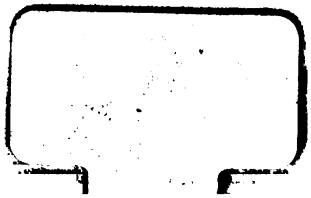

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1866.

PUBLIC SPIRIT.

[A political pamphlet]

Non aliter quàm qui adverso vix flumine lembum
Remigiis subigit; si brachia fortè remisit,
Atque illum in præceps prono rapit alveus amni.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. ASPERNE, AT THE BIBLE, CROWN, AND CONSTITUTION, CORNHILL;

AND TAYLOR AND HESSEY, 93, FLEET STREET;

By J. Moyes, Shoe Lane.

1808.

PRICE THREE SHILLINGS.

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THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.
1898.

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PUBLIC SPIRIT.

GREAT dangers to our country are impending; the crisis of her fate approaches.

We anxiously turn our eyes toward the external foe, whose gigantic strength is now stretched forth, in every direction, to overwhelm us; and we place ourselves, with manly fortitude, in the best attitude of defence of which we are capable. Our courage is undaunted, and we feel no dread of the result. Different opinions may dictate different postures to be assumed; but to guard against the open hostilities of the enemy is deemed to be our paramount duty, and we overlook all others.

We are blindly confident, that whilst our energies are, in that manner, prepared against him, there remains no cause to suspect ourselves. We easily believe it to be impossible that any men, or any party, can, in any war, prove false to their country, and least of all in such a war as the present; heedlessly believing the popular axiom to be true, that, when the country is imminently threatened from without,

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we shall forget all party disputes and grievances within, and instantly rally in a firm phalanx round the throne, for our common security. Thus, further reflection is banished.

Under this soothing reliance, and from want of proper reflection, we seem insensible to dangers, not indeed apparently terrific in their hourly progress, but of equally destructive magnitude with the hostile discharge of cannon, and by which our ruin may be as completely accomplished, unless due precaution be applied.

Without either exaggerating or diminishing the danger of the military preparations which are making against us; and without depreciating, on the other hand, the means of defence which have been put in practice, let us be aware, that in the fluctuation of public parties there unhappily now exists within ourselves an unfavorable change of circumstances, of a most alarming nature, in the principles of our political character. Hence arise the dangers to be cautioned against; for our alert enemy is ever on the watch, to profit by insidious and undermining measures, as much as by the strong hand of open hostility.

Already may we fancy that a sardonic smile upon his countenance shows his belief, that we are taking the means which may effectively paralyse our own exertions, and favor his wishes.

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What new remedy is to be pointed out? No new remedy: but the application of approved remedies to a disorder which now appears in a new shape.

The endeavour, in these pages, will be briefly and fairly to examine our situation; pointing out the nature of our neglected dangers, together with the faults from which they spring; and this from the earnest desire of exciting, in behalf of our otherwise devoted country, every patriotic sensation which, from inauspicious causes, may have too long remained supine.

In such an investigation, every man knows that the ingenuity of party could write volumes in support of opposing reasonings, to favor its own purposes; and this not with the view to instruct, but to occupy attention; not to convince the judgment, but to bewilder it. In order to discover the truth, let us lose sight of the sophisticated records of party. In a plain story, it may be easily discovered whether there be any attempt to mislead the head or the heart.

It is generally remarked, that in this country the public divide into party. This may be true: but what is understood by the appellation of party? We may be attached in politics to particular leading men; or, in an higher sense, to measures alone. In parliament, indeed, experience teaches us, that members, to be efficient, must

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be leaders, or attach themselves to leading men, otherwise they become uselessly troublesome. But, out of parliament, our great duty is to examine measures, and to avoid particular attachments. Those who embrace the profession of politics, have, like men in other employments, their bread to earn, or their points of personal ambition to obtain; and in these particular pursuits, or passions, the real welfare of the nation may sometimes be lost sight of: political characters, then, require to be watched with wary circumspection. We may approve a war, and disapprove the ministers who conduct it; and, by a parity of reasoning, we may disapprove a war, and yet disapprove the conduct of those who oppose the measure. But it is certain, that amidst the pressure of the private pursuits of every individual in the nation, it is naturally found more easy to adopt the political sentiments of others, than to form decisions for ourselves; and thus, by degrees, we submit our judgments to others, and become party-men in spite of ourselves. This circumstance, however, it is not to be denied, has, in ordinary times, advantages as well as disadvantages; neither of which is it necessary, on this occasion, to discuss. The immediate purport of these remarks is, to deprecate, in the present instance, all spirit of confined party, when there should be no party

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but the nation. This is not a moment for the indulgence of attachments or aversions, but for opening our eyes to undisguised truths, and to avow the faults both of measures and men, in order to promote the safety of the general weal.

To prevent us from becoming subservient to the enemy, we ought to bear in view, much more than we do, that his mode of warfare is not confined to strength against strength, nor to strength against the wealth and resources of nations; but that it likewise radically and essentially combines intrigue with cunning, directed, unweariedly, against the human mind. In vain may we brace our bodily frames for action, and attain a superiority in military discipline, if we are unnerved in our councils, or relaxed in any part of our moral system; for there his experience teaches him to obtain his best advantage. How the nation has laid itself open to him, shall be endeavoured to be made appear.

We are, unfortunately, accustomed rashly to think too highly of our own political character, and therefore too lightly of the means of its being assailed. We deem ourselves true to our country, because perhaps we do not sell ourselves, in the grossest sense of the word, for vile trash. But to be false, comprehends a great deal more: we are false in rendering to the enemy any services whatsoever, to the prejudice

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of our country. Such services are various: they may be gratuitous, as well as purchased by him; they may be indirect, as well as direct; passive, as well as active; they may be even bestowed unconsciously; for pride may disdain to accept a proffered bribe, whilst a different attack secures a stronger hold upon a weak or unguarded head, or a wicked heart: and whether an ignorant dupe be made, or a willing instrument be found, the service is the same. Men in public life, not sufficiently enlightened, frequently become the Marplots of the system of their own government, and thereby unwary instruments in furthering the wishes and projects of the enemy. A soldier, who wields his weapon either unskilfully or intemperately, is dangerous to his comrades more than to his foes. In which way soever any of those mischiefs are accomplished, our right political character is undermined, and the watchful duty to our country undischarged.

By this high estimation of ourselves, we have been deceived, also, most glaringly, in our conception of the means employed by the enemy against the powers of the continent; imagining that he owes much of his success to the effect of his pecuniary bribes on ministers and generals, and other characters placed in authority. If he has been, on that account, victorious, we

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have good reason to rest satisfied that similar means will not avail against Britons. But let us not dream over this unproved surmise, worthy only of popular prejudice. We cannot be wrong in taking for granted that the high servants of other powers were as inaccessible to direct bribery, as persons are in similar spheres in our own country.

In seeking for causes, it is certainly clear that corruption, though not so applied, has still effected its office.

There is a corruption to which public spirit is liable, more to be dreaded, because it is contagious, than corruption by money, the mischief of which is confined in the first instance to the person who accepts it. In promoting the growth of this corruption of the spirit of nations, the French have dealt lavishly. It has been directed against the obviously predominant failings of human nature, in all ranks, throughout different countries; and has been as multifarious in its operations as man is fickle and assailable in his nature. It has been as remarkable for the sagacity of its original applications, as for vigilance in profiting of every subsequent advantage, in the vicissitudes of persons, seasons, and events.

Notwithstanding the favorable opinion entertained by ourselves, as Englishmen, we

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should violate probability and truth in imagining, either that we had rested, until the present moment, free from that corruption spoken of, or that we are not now, more than ever, liable to be rendered by it false to the country.

In order that similar perils, which have decided the fates of nations less fortunately circumstanced than our own, may be justly contemplated, it is necessary to take a review, and a very slight one will suffice, of the fraudulent and undermining means which have been resorted to by the enemy to obtain his purpose. There is no difficulty in now developing them, since extensive designs of every description must be, in their principles, plain and simple; and because at this advanced period of the French revolution, we can judge of events which, when passing, were attempted to be disguised by France herself, and which became much more obscured, to our perceptions, by the violence of party-spirit at home.

It is self-evident, that in the very beginning of the revolution in France, the ruling powers at Paris felt that hostilities with every established government were unavoidable. It matters not, to the present part of this subject, whence this conviction arose; whether from their conceptions of its expediency in the prosecution of their own views, or from their con-

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viction of the necessity of a prepared defence against the designs of foreign powers. This only is certain, with respect to ourselves, that no proffered friendship from us, no neutrality on our part, no threatened hostilities by this country, could have altered the resolutions of France. We were of importance enough to be attempted to be deceived; but not, in the estimation of France, of power sufficient to rule her destinies.

On the conviction of the necessity for war the plans of France were founded; and that they might be irrevocably fixed, a step was taken which could not be palliated, and which was, for that special reason, promptly and decisively adopted. She, at once, haughtily proclaimed war against all kings, and gave an invitation to all people to abjure allegiance to their actual sovereigns. By those disorganizing words, she effected the double purpose of engaging the ardor of her own soldiers, and of trying to contaminate the armies of different potentates, to impose terror on the people and their rulers. This proclamation is the bold, unvarying text, to which she still adheres, and from which every military project has emanated, and every corrupt intrigue been hatched. The very existence of the revolution was committed to the safeguard of this defiance.

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The military operations in which France became engaged, have, in all countries, been preceded and accompanied by a few systematic stratagems, founded on a knowledge of mankind; and if it should even be questioned whether these have or have not contributed essentially to the favorable issue of her enterprises, it would be sufficient, for our warning, that they have been deemed, by their authors, so to have done, since the repetition of them has constantly been had recourse to, under new forms, as expedience required.

To give effect to the object of attaching the people of other countries to the cause of France, by detaching them from their established governments, an active agency was established. Crowds of Frenchmen, with all the native ardor of their volatile character, were engaged, to disseminate her doctrines, indefatigably, through the means of the press, and through seductive personal intercourse, addressed to the prejudices, the passions, the weaknesses or grievances of every nation, and of every individual whom they could assail. Crowds of Frenchwomen, too, were to devote themselves with equal zeal to the same purposes.

Unfortunately, circumstances favored these views. Not only were they recommended by novelty and innovating rage, but there was

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scarcely any thing to oppose them, from the laxity and exhaustion of other governments. These intriguers every where made proselytes, who in their turn became as desirous as their teachers to multiply the sect. If, in infusing French principles into the mass of a people, they sometimes stumbled on an unyielding character, no labor was deemed too great in attempting to render him, unwittingly, at least passive. Did he love his country? They heaped upon his mind speculation after speculation for her benefit. Did he love money? They promised him the philosopher's stone. Was he fond of women? Women threw themselves into his arms, and kept him in fairy land. Every passion, every weakness, was played upon, until it became subservient to their designs. Too fatally all obstacles gave way, and whole nations were seduced, before they were subdued.

Without such agency, the approach of the French in foreign countries, besides being dreaded as that of invaders, would have conveyed a greater horror, as being attempted by revolutionists, who, having destroyed their own establishments, wanted to subvert the governments, laws, and habits of others. Their insidious intentions would have been published only to the

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winds, had they not adopted these corrupt and abandoned measures.

By those agents, it will be recollected, that the French gave their first watch-word to the world, 'Friendship and Fraternity;' and then announced their original irruptions, predatory as they were against all ranks indiscriminately, under the mockery of, 'Peace to the cottage, 'and war to the palace!' and by dint of those deceitful words, deadened a material portion of the spirit of resistance, which would otherwise have been opposed against their armies. By the same agents, and with success of which events proved the extent, they artfully promised, in Holland, to protect that commerce which they were preparing to pillage; in Italy, to encourage the arts, whilst they were already sending conveyances to rob the country of every distinguished specimen which formed its riches and its boast; and they promised to revere and cherish christianity, which they had already driven from France; and finally, in Egypt, announced themselves as sincere converts to the doctrine of Mahomet. In thus paving the way for themselves every where by the gross use of the most opposite delusions, they calculated on afterwards retaining their influence by force alone.

On comparing all this with what was particularly passing in this country, we find that here,

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and even whilst the government was employed in repressing the indications of a French spirit, we indulged ourselves as spectators of events abroad, and smiled contemptuously at the success of these shallow artifices. We flattered ourselves that we were above the power of imposition, by similar hypocrisy. Alas! human nature every where is miserably frail. We are even now unwilling to admit how nearly and how often we have been on the brink of becoming sacrifices ourselves.

It is but too true, that here, as in other countries, at the same period, the French had infatuated in their favor a party sufficiently powerful to be dreaded, both in consequence and numbers. Their war-cry against kings was raised with vehemence, and with a considerable temporary effect. Visible treason excited awful alarm; and from what was actually seen, there can be no hesitation in believing that invisible treason had nearly been able to work its last deed, and then burst into open rebellion. Lively and strong as this impressive lesson ought to dwell on our memories, we are not aware of the insidious and persevering methods by which the enemy has, always, receded and advanced in his ambush; fastening himself on our prejudices, and striving to identify himself with us. He experienced, however, with this

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sensible nation, the difficulty of levelling the king to the rank of the tyrants, so called by him, on the continent, against whom he had vowed vengeance; but he had, in the outset, probed and discovered parts of our political character more vulnerable.

He found, for instance, that there were abundance of chances in his favor, by raising a cry against the king's minister. By endeavouring to separate the minister from the nation, the effect would have been in many respects substantially the same, since the king appoints his own minister.

Again; the enemy was not contented with the enlarged means which he found afforded to him by our press, for all his purposes of corrupting us, and which he did not fail to use.

He was even so audacious as to hope that our parliament itself might become a principal engine.

Many details ought not to be required, in order to recal satisfactory proof of those facts; and thereby awaken us to a due sense of our difficulties.

The French expected much from the effect here of that watch-word, 'Friendship and Fraternity.' They vainly fancied, or at least called themselves free; and because they knew we piqued ourselves, and with reason, on being really

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so, they relied on our particular sympathy in their cause. They infused the idea, that war, against the free people of France, could not be the war of the free people of England; and that it was, therefore, the horrid suggestion of the king's minister. The name of the minister was identified, and wonderful pains were taken to raise up a spirit of execration against the name of Pitt, and against him personally, in order to render war more unpopular. This expedient met with an extraordinary degree of success for the moment. It was buoyant on our common place clamors; and, by the dexterity with which it was managed, kept those clamors alive, whilst it soared beyond them to its own object. A man less firm than Pitt, would perhaps have been less steady than he proved himself to be, during a trying crisis, without a precedent to guide him; yet who can doubt now, that in yielding to the torrent which it was his glory to stem, the country would not have been lost?

Of the name of Fox, or of any other person who had happened to be at the helm of government, directing the war, the same ready pretext would have been made, and probably with more complete success, in flattering the people of England, and entirely diverting their reflections from the true consideration of the hostile conduct and views of the enemy.

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In this attempt, and for their other purposes, the French found in our press, as has been already said, a willing instrument. The press was thrown into their hands before they asked for its assistance. Unlike the example of foreign countries, where they were obliged, principally, to work the press by stealth, and to labor themselves in the propagation of the sentiments they wished to promulgate, here they found their intentions greatly anticipated in the spontaneous effusions of party-politicians. They had only to fan the fuel already lighted, in order to proceed in the general conflagration which they meditated; they had only to become the most outrageous contributors to those newspapers, which, being encouraged more by violence than freedom of discussion, the foul funnels of the press were already devoted to the cause; and they had only to pay for the universal distribution of those writings of other descriptions, which rank wickedness and hot-headed ignorance had already prepared. The ferment which they by those means excited, the partiality for their cause which they engrafted on us, were circumstances which burst on the observations and feelings of the coldest. Men, in meeting together, caught every day an additional spark of the electrical fire of the revolutionary system. Not only were large societies

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founded amongst ourselves for the propagation of French principles, copying the forms and phrases recently invented in France; but, strange to tell! deputations of Englishmen were sent to Paris, charged to express the most unreserved ebullitions in favor of the pursuits of the revolutionists, who, no doubt, smiled at the dupes they had created. It required much exertion, presence of mind, and good sense, in a part of the nation, and all the vigor of government, during severe struggles, to effect our narrow escape from that vortex into which we should otherwise have been most rapidly drawn.

We shudder in those recollections; yet the enemy, not confining himself to attack the feelings of the mass of the people, grappled with us still more to our hazard in his other aim of domineering over parliament. Opposition presented itself to his fertile and active spirit, as the spring which might possibly be set in motion. He well knew, that through a persevering opposition, ministers were overthrown; and that the country cherishes an opposition, as the favorite source of preservation to the constitution. Therefore the French embassy here was dedicated for sometime to besiege the avenues which were likely to secure possession of the feelings of the leaders of opposition; and soon found, that their frailties were as accessible as

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those of other people. Those leaders, taken by surprise, became more and more confirmed in the persuasion that the minister was wrong in not entering into the views of the French revolutionists, and in not appreciating their cause and friendship as they deserved. The progress of the intrigues on the part of the French embassy, was evident to every unbiassed bye-stander: their effect appeared in the result.

Mr. Fox was so thoroughly the soul and organ of opposition, during the whole of the last war, that in speaking of either, we think of both. The idea is inseparable. Whatever Mr. Fox may have been to private friends, he was, in the eyes of the public, the leader of an opposition, of which the other characters appeared to be his submissive followers. Whatever credit or demerit was acquired by the opposition, it attached to Mr. Fox, and vice versa. This being assumed and granted, we can bring into a narrow view the result of the intrigues of the French embassy.

Mr. Fox, full of the enthusiasm which, however inspired, he no doubt felt in favor of the French, was eager to avail himself of all opportunities, direct and indirect, in parliament, to testify his favorite sentiments. This enthusiasm was attempted to be checked, and he was put upon his guard, in no common manner, even by

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bosom friends, the purity of whose intentions, and the rationality of whose judgments, could at least stand in competition with his own. The effect produced on him was a wounded pride, and greater obstinacy in his opinions. Like men of less note, impatient of contradiction, he was provoked to exclaim, on behalf of one of the now forgotten Utopian and ephemeral paper constitutions of France, which had no real existence even for an instant, that it was the most stupendous and glorious edifice of liberty ever erected on the foundation of human wisdom in any age or country!

No caricature could be more highly seasoned in all its points than this, as a picture or a praise of any stage or proceedings of the revolution it so vauntingly admired. It gives, however, so correct a specimen of the opinions on which opposition acted at that time, that no additional quotations could serve more clearly in illustration.

Yet a man in the situation of Mr. Fox could not commit himself, however wildly, without having numerous and zealous supporters. In echoing his opinions, they became so clamorous, that the firmness of government might have been compelled to have given way, had not some men of high influence in rank, property, and character, who had been used to act

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in concert with Mr. Fox, ceased their political connexions with him, in their declared abandonment of the cause so intemperately supported.

There is a numerous class of men in this country, who unblushingly adopt and avow a maxim, which is, notwithstanding, universally admitted to be incompatible with true greatness of mind; namely, a pertinacious adherence to what has once escaped the lips. Whilst all ministers are applauded when they retract errors, and profit by lessons from friends or from foes, opposition, on the other hand, imagines that it loses in consequence and influence by acknowledging fallibility, and therefore seems obstinately bent on hardy assertion against all conviction, trying to hide past folly in the accumulation of new matter.

Although the secession of a part of the opposition had due influence in rousing reflection in a proportionate part of the nation, it operated no change on the rest of their own body. The intemperate opinions already uttered naturally led them to extravagance of action; and this again was so characteristically marked, that we are easily enabled to select many examples to prove the uniform continuance of that spirit which showed itself in unison with French views.

One example originated in the course of dis-

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cussion on the suspension of the habeas corpus act; when a member of opposition thought fit to say, that if the measures of ministers were adopted, this country would not be worth defending. This testy idea spread abroad, and the measures declaimed against being adopted, we soon heard the words reverberated, as generally and as loudly as any watch-word given by the French, that this country was not worth defending. The horrible consequences of such a belief, impressed on the public, are so obvious, that the promoters of it do not stand excused in the stale pretext of wishing only to remove ministers who were despotic in their measures. If they were blinded by party-spirit, so grossly as not to perceive how earnestly they were serving the cause of the enemy, they are, at best, weak and dangerous men; not only not fit to be trusted, but most sedulously to be shunned. Had the habeas corpus act not been suspended, what would have been the dreadful consequences?

Another example was evinced in a singular partiality toward a man who underwent a trial for treasonable practices, and in a most singular and offensive zeal in his favor after he was found guilty. Men are not used so to commit themselves for another out of mere friendship. Without, however, indulging suspicions of any more

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powerful sympathy, there was proved, unquestionably, a total absence of the public spirit which ought to distinguish sincere friends to the laws and to their country.

A third example, was in the withdrawing from parliamentary duty. The opposition could not persuade the houses of parliament to follow their advice with respect to the war with France, and for that reason they would no longer give attendance, in the certainty of being outvoted; but they would, out of parliament, maintain their opinions for the benefit of the nation. This was, perhaps, the most arrogant, while it was the silliest dereliction of duty ever witnessed. The best feature of parliament we all know to be, the free canvassing of high interests, on which men have always differed, do differ, and must differ. We all know, that were sittings held until doomsday, men would argue, and still differ. Means, therefore, have been instituted to come to decisions, not by forcing all men to be of the same opinions, but by obliging them to submit to a plurality of voices. To accept a representation in parliament, and to refuse to abide by the plain principles on which parliament is founded, is certainly to practise an injurious deception toward the whole nation. To withdraw because we cannot convince the majority, is childish. To assume superior me-

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rit, purity, or judgment, on behalf of a constant minority, is the worst of presumption. The mob, at an election, are addressed about the corruption of a ministerial majority; but such language is known to be calculated only for the multitude. The circumstance of withdrawing from parliament was a trick; it was the trick of testiness and despair. But it failed in its effect: it was seen to be a trick; it did not produce the interest which the seceders expected; and the French cause gained nothing by the measure. It proves, however, the perseverance of opposition in measures, the character and tendency of which are not changed by the issue.

An extraordinary instance, too, was given a considerable time afterwards, of pertinacity of opinion in Mr. Fox. Even after the French became highly intoxicated with success, he saw not, he said, why this country should be jealous of the power of France: there needed no rivalry but that of augmenting each separately her commerce. As if the ambition of France had descended to commerce, and that she was conquering the continent in order to force it to take her manufactures instead of those of England. Did he not see that she is a military nation, with a military government, accustomed to triumph and command? Surely, then, it would be most inconsistent that she should deign to

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stoop to a commercial rivalry with England. The power of England had undoubtedly given her jealousy. Was this to be assuaged by establishing cotton and woollen and other manufactories, and trying to become a more renowned trader than England? It is true that the basis of the power of the British Isles is commerce, and therefore has France attacked her commerce; not to rival, but to destroy it. It was never the basis of the power of continental France. In England it is honoured; in France it never was, nor can be so. The motives to that effect are contrary to experience and to the inherent character of that nation. France herself would go beyond Mr. Fox: she would willingly tell us that her highest ambition is to be a nation of shopkeepers, which was the most opprobrious term she could invent against us, if she could thereby lull our suspicions as to her real designs.

Connected with the attempt of the French on parliament, was one subordinate and of shorter duration, directed to the friends of the people, a society of some sway over the public mind; being composed of members of parliament and other gentlemen, for the sole purpose of obtaining a reform in parliament. Into this popular society, men devoted to France obtained admittance; and were not, at first, objects of suspicion,

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under their extraordinary zeal. But their high towering ambition was not of a nature to be restrained; they soon avowed their aim to be that of imitative revolution, toward which this ladder of reform gave them some specious steps. Being discovered, they were deserted by a respectable part of the society, which, then, thought fit to suspend its own purpose, and thus that of the French was in this instance, too, defeated.

In this recapitulation of some leading facts, it is amply recognized, that the system of intrigue which had been so propitious to the French abroad, was likewise introduced by them, with peculiar assiduity, into this country. It appears that they were eminently successful in making converts, and in corrupting true patriotism. We may reasonably affirm, that their armies would have been at that time joined by many from amongst ourselves. That they happened to fail, may in part be attributed to the unbridled impetuosity of their own partisans; but we are principally indebted for their failure to the watchful and vigorous counteraction of government, and to the sturdy good sense of that part of the nation which continued to feel, in the midst of all the outrageous flippancy of adverse sentiments, that the country was still worth defending.

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Although those matters occurred during a period which we are now accustomed to distinguish by the name of the last war, we ought not to lose sight of them, and indulge the fatal supposition that they are inapplicable to our present contest. Let us rather endeavour to reap every possible benefit from past experience.

It can be shown, with respect to France, that notwithstanding the intervention of a short nominal peace, she never did relax in any part either of secret hostilities or warlike preparations: nor has any change whatever taken place in the direction of her speculations and views, ever since she resolved on war in the beginning of the revolution.

With respect to ourselves, the dangers of all kinds which we incurred during the last war, are now heaped tenfold on our heads. But let us continue to confine ourselves, as originally proposed, to those dangers which proceed from a most unfavorable change in our interior politics. Has not, then, the vigor of government been much diminished? Is there not a greater bias in the opposition, and in the country at large, toward French seduction?

And first, with respect to the unchangeable direction of the views of France, we must begin by banishing from our thoughts all that we are accustomed to hear, either in praise or dispa-

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ragement of France, and by forgetting every thing which has been said in parliament about her friendly disposition toward us, as well as every thing which our national pride has taught us to imagine about the degree of influence of our power over her. Those ideas lead us astray from the consideration of the feelings of France herself, whilst she studies us only to take advantage of us. The feelings which govern her have proceeded from sources never diverted by us, and very opposite to those which we possess. To trace them, we must endeavour for a moment to denationalize ourselves, and stand as much as possible in her place.

Intelligent Frenchmen, revolving this inquiry in their minds, would commune with themselves to the following effect:—That they could not say whether, in the beginning of the revolution, hostilities entered first into the minds of the revolutionists or of the coalesced continental powers. Both parties may be presumed to have been early alive to consequences of importance to all Europe, arising out of the destruction of the most powerful government in Europe, and which had always borne great sway amongst the surrounding nations.

It was natural that the first demonstrations of hostilities should proceed from the coalesced powers; either because they were seized with

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the fear of a new order of things in France, or because they might be eager to profit by her confusion: whilst, on the other hand, it was not only good policy in France to hold out deceitful symbols of peace to the whole world, but, if possible, to wait for actual hostilities against her, in order to be better able, on that account, to direct the enthusiasm of the new republicans in the manner she intended.

But both parties had foreseen and secretly anticipated the necessity of hostilities. They knew, let theorists say and moralists preach what they will, that the world never was and never can be guided by a calm consideration of what is mutually due between nations; they knew that time produces essential changes in the preponderating balance, against which some will fight, whilst others cannot yield; and, that self-interest being always ready armed, there is often safety in anticipating defence by open aggression.

Therefore, the bold revolutionists, who, not to speak it profanely, undertook to ride in the whirlwind and direct the storm of the revolution, were equally resolved to encounter contending elements, without the sphere of France, and within it. They judged, that there would be no means of putting an end to contention and slaughter in France, nor of giving her an

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efficient government, until she should be impelled to fight against exterior enemies. Thus they prepared for war; but they likewise judged that foreign powers would afford them their best pretext.

On the other hand, the coalesced powers, who had been accustomed to dread the greatness and still greater ambition of France, could not resist the temptation of attacking her in the crisis of the ruin of one government, and before the establishment of another. Perhaps they wished only to curb France, for their own safety; perhaps they thought of dividing amongst them part of her territory; perhaps they were fearful lest the destruction of that government might lead to similar fates in others. Above all, they could not but be aware, that new France, from selfish motives on her part, would not allow them to remain at peace with her. Thus did they feel themselves compelled to go to war.

England came next into view. She was ranked by France as an enemy. England herself scarcely even now sees, what every other nation saw, and what many events have proved, the impossibility of her neutrality during a contest between great continental powers. The system of politics which, until this time, had been prevailing in Europe, would have entitled

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some powers to demand her weighty interference, independently of particular treaties which existed. Besides, she could not, as a bye-stander, carry on her commerce, without infringing the laws of war, to the prejudice of one party or other; and would she submit, in that respect, to the restrictions laid on nations of less consideration? France judged that she would not. She knew also that England, in hostilities, would not take part with France, for England could not add her strength to strength always deemed too strong. Those reasons were decisive with France.

England, herself, stood on higher ground than the continental powers. The seeds of hostilities sown by France gave her no fear, independently of the fate of the continent. She had particular engagements with, as well as a general interest in, the continent; and she inclined to believe that good faith and policy required her to join the coalesced powers. Besides, the conduct of the revolutionists toward her could not veil their insults; and, finally, she had no secret repugnance against a war which promised, contrary to present apparent circumstances, to preserve and augment her trade. Thus she declared for war.

Such were the feelings on all sides which dictated hostilities. If even those alone, on the

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part of France, had existed, it mattered not what were the desires of others. France was the impelling power, and all the others must have been forced into the vortex which she had prepared.

Under the circumstances thus described, supposing amity to have been actually proffered on either side, the conclusions to have been inferred were, that, if made on the part of France, it was a deception easily to be seen through and rejected; and if on the part of her enemies, a proof of respect, if not of dread, which French soldiers would have been taught to consider with contempt. Therefore, whatever regret might be anticipated, or triumph hoped for, by either party, war was not to have been avoided.

Entered into, the war soon assumed a character which defied treaty, other than nominal. If the continental powers had met with success, it is difficult to guess what terms of peace would have contented them. They would, probably, have demanded the restoration of the family of Bourbon, but under some diminution of the power and influence of the kingdom of France; and after terminating war on those conditions, France, in two years more, would have asserted by arms, and against the continent, her former power. But as that was not the case, the republicans, situated as they found

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themselves to be, would impose terms, and not accept them; they would not agree, they would command.

Without being Frenchmen, it is scarcely possible to conceive how ardent France is, when embarked in war. She is, what England has been called by her, a proud domineering nation. But she applauds herself on descending, at the same time, to a prodigal use of address, in which she deems that she excels; and therefore, in pursuing her high pretensions, she thinks it fully as necessary to captivate the world by prepossessions in favor of her cause or her power, as to march unfeelingly her destructive armies against those whom she chooses to deem her enemies. She is only in her element when her emissaries and her armies are abroad in the midst of adventures. Then it is, that genius and science, as well as quixotical chimeras, are exhausted, in plans for the aggrandisement and glory of France; and then it is, that her government hopes to reap immortality, in the achievement of some of the great deeds of conquest recommended in the favorite manuscript *Memoires*, which are carefully preserved in her archives, as food to form the Machiavelian studies of her statesmen.

Frenchmen alone know how very seriously they have always entertained the expectation

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of acquiring sovereign universal power. That object is the great theme of those unpublished *Memoires*. Contemplating what has been already done by an Alexander or a Charlemagne, by Greeks, Romans, Goths, and Saracens, it has been easy to lead speculation on toward the greater practicability of accomplishing mightier objects than are known to have been achieved on the globe.

Possessed, as the French are, of such ardent dispositions, they have always, during peace, remained impatient under the restraints imposed on each European nation by the rest. Their desires ever bend toward war; although with no object more specific than that of increasing the extent of their dominion, confiding in chance and themselves for forwarding their ambition to the utmost. Their revolutionary wars have had that stamped character, and the same uniform direction; and were, at first, not less indeterminate as to final views. Speedily, however, they acquired more precise and probable shapes than could have entered into any preconceived calculations.

The combined powers, by marching their troops against France, gave the republicans the looked-for opportunity of exclaiming against unprovoked aggression. Much prepared declamation was made use of, in France, to turn the

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torrent of revolutionary rage against their common enemies. But, at the same time, the moderation which had been studiously assumed in the demeanor of government and the views of the republic toward the nations around, was kept up. No provocation was to induce pure republican France to go beyond a war of mere defence; she never could be an aggressor; she abjured conquest, and should confine herself within her own sacred bounds: she was never to pass the Rubicon!

This affectation was too ridiculous to be termed hypocrisy: it was as false as of short duration. The real and fixed resolution of France could not be mistaken in that proclamation, which denounced war against all kings, accompanied by the invitation to all people to become republicans like themselves. She was then panting for the conquests which she disowned; and waited, with burning impatience, to be able to publish herself the mistress of additional territories.

No sooner had she begun to be successful, by driving the Austrians from the Netherlands, than she seized upon those provinces, and proclaimed them to be an integral part of the French republic. Still she professed that this accession had become essential to her own safety, but that she nevertheless maintained her

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first principles, and did not seek new conquests.

Yet France could no more be satisfied with this conquest, important to her as it was, than the Austrians could, at that time, submit to be deprived of a portion of their dominions so valuable in all respects. The continuance of war, then, would have led, of course, on the part of any other victorious nation, as well as France, to the aim of further diminishing the strength and resources of her enemies. But the rage of dominion in the breast of France was swelling; and no conquest, however great or unexpected, could keep pace, but in a trifling degree, with the immense projects which her mind now deemed her capable of performing.

The emperor of Germany was, at that moment, the only continental enemy whom she respected: for at no period of the war did Prussia give her any serious anxiety. She found the policy of that court to be so invariably weak, that she could not only, at all times, prevent it from acting with effect in concert with Austria, but could with equal facility thwart its separate projects. Prussia herself has proved it, in that melancholy document of her lost independence, the manifesto of her weak conduct down to the fatal period of her being humbled and at the foot of France.

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France held Spain in similar contempt and thraldom. She knew that that government, and the resources of the country, would soon be at her own disposal.

Russia, at a remote distance, had not yet brought forward her armies, which could move but slowly, and with difficulty.

Holland, from causes which her moral energies, had they been greater than they were, could not have prevented, had become a prey to France.

In addition to the power of the House of Austria, Great Britain was a formidable foe. Yet she was not so held by France in the strength of her army, nor even in the superiority of her navy, but in her means of thwarting the ambition of France, by subsidising and animating the powers of the continent. The exertions of France were, therefore, put forth against her: but finding that no impression was likely to be made by any force which could be spared, consistently with the more essential and congenial purposes which she had in view upon the continent, it was resolved to make war chiefly against her trade; for in her trade France deemed her strength to consist, and by which her subsidies were effected.

When France, therefore, after the subjugation of the Netherlands, had overpowered England's

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ally, Holland, she thought that she had obtained, by both events, advantages as prejudicial to England as the loss of the Netherlands alone was to Austria; and her exultation and confidence of future success were raised to the highest pitch.

From this early period, then, it may be traced, that the speculations of France indulged themselves in the most extended range, and that she steadily pursued her great objects, the subjugation of the whole continent, and the total exclusion thence of England and her commerce. The Parisian journalists were, at that time, ordered to flatter the national vanity on those topics, and to hint at projects of universal empire, after the ruin of England, already, as they remarked, begun in Europe, and intended to be completed in India.

The whole of this system has only, indeed, by degrees been directly avowed by the governments of France, yet it has never been departed from by any of them. The rulers of France, whatever titles they may have assumed, whether those of directors, consuls, or emperors, still governed France on the old principle of feeding the imaginations of the people with ideas of the greatness and glory of their country. Whenever it was thought necessary to carry intrigues into foreign countries, for the gaining of friends,

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it was a principle laid down, to be conciliatory and flattering toward the French people themselves. The known character of the nation made this easy. Their passion for extending the French name was so proverbial, that, in finding it gratified, they used in former times to idolize their rulers; and, with them, the greatest and most glorious of their monarchs were those who were most signally distinguished in arms. On the destruction of the late monarchy, it was a natural suggestion to turn the idolatry, then without an object, on the people themselves, and to persuade them that they were the cause of the national glory. If the same sentiment has not again rebounded toward a new dynasty and a victorious monarch, it is a bad augur for him.

As none of the many changes in the French government has produced any change in the exterior politics of the nation, it will readily be conceived, that every successful step gained by her on every enemy, has been made use of as 'vantage ground toward obtaining absolute power over all. Every truce has served as a breathing time to refresh her armies, and has been made use of to strengthen her ascendancy, and to multiply, by the positions she assumed, foreign vassals.

The next proof given by France to the world

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of this disposition, was by incorporating with the republic the German electorates on the left side of the Rhine. So valuable an increase of territory, population, and riches, gave her likewise what she called her natural boundary, beyond which she swore, as was her custom, that she would not extend herself.

But war, as expected, was continued between her and Austria, beyond the Rhine and in Italy. France now, before acquiring further conquests which she should be able to maintain, announced the new pretext, that her safety required that she should be surrounded by small republics, and that she intended to create them from out of the German states beyond the Rhine, and even from out of the territories of Austria in Italy: thus preparing the mind of her enemy for fresh spoliations and more severe losses, which, it was evident, she meant in some shape to appropriate to herself.

The increasing danger of entire ruin to the emperor called forth all his energies, and the co-operation of a Russian army. Many hard-fought battles were won and lost, but ultimately to the benefit of France, and a short peace took place to her advantage.

The republic of France then became avowedly a military government. This circumstance has no other interest than to show, according to

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what has been already understood, that her views of conquest were pursued, without the introduction of any new system. One change, of mere form only, expressed before taking the field, that France, instead of small republics, meditated that the several governments of Europe should resemble the members of one family, whose chief should be France.

Enough has been said to prove on the part of France a rage of conquest, which could not brook peace. Without greater details of well known events, it did not require much divination, at that period, to foretel that a short continuance of the success in which France had been accustomed to move, would give her the entire sovereignty of the continent.

This result may be said to be now accomplished; although the labours of France are not completed, nor has the service of her armies ceased. Her future proceedings, in place of battles, will probably consist of those arrangements which she may make to quarter her troops in the countries over which she intends to retain influence or dominion by their aid.

Whether France could have proceeded with more rapid strides, may be matter of opinion; yet she seems to adopt the necessary policy of protracting in some shape a state of warfare, on a principle analogous to one of those on which

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she had engaged in it; for if it then suited her to draw the attention of the nation against their exterior enemies, it is become no less expedient now to keep her numerous hosts in foreign countries. For what would be the fate of a newly usurped military government, in a military nation, flushed with victories, if the armies were to return home in search of pay and employment?

Throughout the series of the continental successes of France, her mode of warfare against England has been persevered in with indefatigable uniformity. The process is short: English property is confiscated, Englishmen are proscribed, and English manufactures and produce prohibited, wherever France rules. Not only has this rigid determination been enforced during war, but it suffered little or no relaxation, except in a partial manner for the special benefit of France, during the short interval of peace which, in the midst of many of her ineffectual attempts to that effect, Great Britain had obtained.

The undisguised actions of France, in that period, are additional proofs of the continuance of her system, which no peace could alter. She had left the treaty itself unconcluded, and our negotiator at Amiens, whilst the consul went to Lyons to assume the sovereignty of Italy, and

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whilst France obtained from Spain the cession of Louisiana. Subsequently to signing the treaty, she seized the sovereignty of Switzerland; and when England ventured to hint at a remonstrance against this new accumulation of extraordinary power, France declared openly, that by this treaty of Amiens she understood England to have resigned all future interference in the politics of the continent; and she accompanied this important remark by adhering to the principle of excluding likewise English commerce, by constantly refusing to admit English manufactures, or to make any treaty or arrangements for admitting us to trade with her.

In those particulars are again seen the persevering intentions of France to be sovereign of the continent, in spite of Great Britain. France continued to be equally explicit and designing in her conduct toward England on her own shores. For, under the disguise of commercial agents, she sent engineers, and other military officers, with instructions to survey fortifications and to sound harbours; and she also directed her ambassador to make representations, requesting alterations of the municipal laws of England in respect to the freedom of the press, which she was too sagacious not to know never would be acceded to. Can a doubt then remain

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of the pre-determined bent of France to follow her views of ruining and subjugating England?

If further demonstration of this were wanted, it was subsequently given. When war was renewed, the same severity against Englishmen and English trade was promulgated in all the additional countries to which French conquests, by new successes, extended. France imagined more than ever that England was dependent, for existence, upon her trade with Europe; and, in her vague and ignorantly over-rated ideas of this dependence, erroneously fancied, that in the fall of Europe England also fell.

Therefore, on every occasion of signal victories on the continent, she seized the opportunity of publishing some marked reference to the situation of England. Thus, when the battle at Ulm was gained, the French emperor is understood to have said, as if he carried a talisman on whose virtue he relied, 'that he wanted only, now, ships, colonies, and commerce;' in the firm belief that England would be reduced to yield them to him. In the same belief, when, sometime afterwards, the capital of Prussia fell into his possession, he declared that his troops should not quit that place until England should have given up all the colonies she had captured; and he at the same time published

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an edict, blockading, by words, the British Isles, and more severely prohibiting all trade with the inhabitants. On his return to Paris, he laconically expressed to the senate his desire for a maritime peace; still calculating that England must supplicate that peace which he should dictate. Finally, when France had conquered Russia, she commanded, not only all the governments of Europe, but that of America, to cease every connexion with England, until England should make peace with France. Portugal and Sweden were the only European courts which were able to disobey this mandate. In what way America will conduct herself, remains to be seen.

Farther proofs cannot be required of the uniform system of France toward aggrandizement and dominion. Yet, in corroboration of what has been stated, notice remains to be taken of particular overtures of peace.

England, during the whole war, appears to have sought for opportunities of proposing peace. Besides indirect overtures on her part, three distinct solicitations are recorded.

The first produced a negotiation at Paris, which was broken off because France insisted that the Austrian Netherlands, which she had been pleased to incorporate with France, should be no subject of consideration.

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The next led to the peace of Amiens, which England was compelled to be the first to break through, because it had, in effect, been no peace on the part of France, who was still persisting greatly to aggrandize herself, and continued hostile measures against England individually.

The last time, France received English negotiators, and evaded for five months to answer the plainest questions; and, in the end, without satisfying the negotiators, the French government left them at Paris, while it went away to pursue projected plans of conquest in the north of Europe.

England, besides obtaining, in those results, the conviction that France was not really disposed for any peace which could be acceptable, under existing circumstances, saw in them the contempt with which she was treated by France, who deceived and trifled with her, and would not be diverted from her first and highest purpose of subduing the continent.

France, too, has thought fit repeatedly to propose peace herself. The first time of her doing so was when the present emperor became consul. The stability of affairs in France, for which he wished to take instantaneous and untried credit, was not so apparent to the government of England, and therefore negotiation was naturally deferred on her part. In the other

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proposals of peace, France was detected in betraying her real object to be that of gaining favor, and particularly with the populace of England, for an appearance of condescending moderation, in her prosperous circumstances. For, independently of an insulting manner toward her government, which England could disdain and overlook, France has uniformly offered peace to England alone, although she knew that England had previously declared, that she had engagements which required her to consider at the same time the interests of her allies: and when England has sometimes been enabled to inquire on what conditions France was willing to treat, the conclusion has been ever, and is even now, that, after all her professions, she would not be induced to treat in any way. Certainly her condescending moderation, in the affectation of which she has not deceived even the populace, was in effect a desire and a hope to impose a peace of her own.

This summary review of the conduct, the temper, and the hopes of France, is not the less correct for being free from the colourings of party, nor for being concise. If it be found to accord with what was premised, this inference will occur; that the intrigues of France must have taken a tone corresponding with the tide of her affairs. On this point let it be under-

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stood as applying to England only. France began by courting proselytes in a new cause; she now hopes for an increase of dependents in a strong one. She began by exciting enthusiasm; she now would inspire respect and dread. At first, she tried to make active partisans; now, she expects passive slaves. It is no longer by playing on our lively passions that she strives to make us false to our country, but by deriving advantage from our errors, and by reducing us to apathy and despair. If she should succeed, it is because the nation wills it so, in its torpor and supineness.

After the preceding considerations, arises the most important branch of this subject, the unfavorable change in the interior politics of the nation. It should be recollected, that two questions have been asked: Whether the vigor of government has not been much diminished? and whether there be not a greater bias in the opposition, and in the country at large, toward French seduction? The answer to both questions will appear, by continuing a due attention to those leading facts, which shall be taken up from the recommencement of the war.

Of the unavoidable necessity of that event there existed, throughout the nation, a much more general impression than that which prevailed, respecting war, at the bursting forth of

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the French revolution. The enemy had, then, expressed an affected friendship for us; and, now, he disdained even the appearance of it. He would not allow us to interrupt the career of his ambition; nor could we submit ourselves to be enrolled in the list of fallen people, over whom he proudly assumed a dictatorship. There was, therefore, no alternative, but to renew hostilities. The consequences could be no part of our deliberation in this decision; although those consequences, teeming as they were with dangers, and uncertain as war is, might produce more glory and prosperity to us than had ever been the lot of any nation.

A peace-ministry was removed, in order to make room for the reinstatement of Mr. Pitt, who, by his supreme talents and disinterested devotion to public affairs, having acquired the confidence of his majesty, of parliament, and of the nation, was continued to be looked up to as the fittest person, in the direction of the war, to cope with France. The failure of his former views, and the successes of the French on the continent, were not attributed to misapplication of our resources, but to circumstances beyond human controul. The former ministry of Mr. Pitt had enjoyed the general credit of having maintained the character of a vigorous government, directing an energetic people.

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During Mr. Pitt's new administration, the same spirit, against the enemy, which had before characterized him, as well as the supporters of the war, was again displayed. Within the country, although it was satisfactorily felt, that we had not now to contend against a body of factious people, favorable to France, the members of opposition, notwithstanding, remained essentially in possession of their former principles.

Thus, as if the choice had been in our power, they decried the renewal of war, as presenting more hopeless prospects than ever.

Again, they joined in the French declamation of a breach of good faith on our part, in not delivering up Malta: as if we had not expressly stipulated that Malta should be kept from France, instead of agreeing to deliver it up to her; and as if, in the intermediate time, France herself had not been annihilating the very parties to whom, and not to her, we had mutually agreed that the island should be restored; thereby rendering it more essential that we should remain its guardians, while its fate was in our power.

Mr. Fox, to all his well known opinions on the war, superadded expressions, on many occasions, highly complimentary of the French emperor. He had availed himself of peace to visit

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Paris, and was there noticed by him with marked attentions. At that court, not very discriminating of merit, there was a self-evident policy in thus distinguishing the leader of the opposition in the British house of commons. Penetration into the characters and designs of men was never attributed to Mr. Fox, as being a part of his intellectual character: he was much more apt to lend implicit credence to outward appearances, and became thereby a frequent dupe to his good nature. The flattering reception which he met with, seemed to have gained his heart. His compliments, in return for those which he had himself received, were misplaced in parliament; and, as mere compliments, would not be worth remarking: but one of them, in particular, which conveyed also to the mind an idea bearing a deceitful tendency to sap the foundations of our patriotism, ought to be strongly adverted to.

This compliment to the French emperor was uttered in inveighing against some class of commercial men, whose selfish motives he accused as the support of the war, by which, he said, the country would be ruined. He exclaimed, that he would rather fall a victim to an Alexander than to such base feelings. There was in this declaration an ill humor and an illiberality unworthy of the house of commons. The

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words of Mr. Fox were directed, either to the disparagement of commerce, or against men whom he pointed at as a disgrace to commerce. The first of these suppositions seems to be the least probable; for Mr. Fox, of all men, ought to have taken merit for advocating the cause of commerce; since by commerce our constitution has thriven; it is she who is the parent of individual independence of mind, and has created our national wealth; it is she who has, in a great measure, earned for us the proud station which we hold amongst nations, and has made us considerably instrumental in the civilization of the world: without her, chance might have found Mr. Fox enrolled in the list of armed vassals attached to some licentious feudal baron. Yet the second supposition leaves him equally in the wrong; for he ought in this case to have stigmatized those who disgraced commerce, and have exhorted them to have assumed that respectable independence which characterized the rest of our commercial nation. In place of so reminding them of duty to their country, Mr. Fox, by his inconsiderate comparison, led to a degrading contempt of the war itself, and prepared the nation for admiring an enemy because he was a conqueror. If the idea should ever become prevalent, that the chains of a conqueror would be less insupportable than any pursuits

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which this country can adopt, or than any situation to which she can be reduced by those pursuits, there will be an end to all public spirit. We shall then become tame victims to any conqueror, and meet deservedly the treatment of all subdued nations.

The doctrines of the opposition having gained no new converts, the next memorable occurrences which present themselves, are the defeat of the Austrians and Russians at Austerlitz, and the lamented death of Mr. Pitt.

Each of those events, of great moment in itself, became infinitely more important from their happening nearly together. The confidence which Mr. Pitt had enjoyed, had enabled him to contribute, in no small degree, to the preservation of that tone and elasticity in the spirit of the nation, without which ascendancy discontents might have insinuated themselves, through the address of the enemy, and the weariness of nature become tired in a protracted contest. At no period of the war would superior influence, in strengthening patriotic feelings, have been more welcomed by the public than when the battle of Austerlitz was made known. Not because the fate of miserable Europe was then decided, for Europe had been lost by many preceding unfortunate events; but because we then found one of the greatest efforts

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to redeem Europe destroyed; because the certainty of the slavery of Europe was thereby confirmed; and because we should be obliged to prosecute the war, with hopes of termination still more remote. The animating exertions of Mr. Pitt's mind were now no more to cheer us: he had long been ill; and died, without receiving comfort himself, or communicating consolation to us, by his counsels for our future welfare and conduct.

Since that period we have seen three ministries in succession, each of which has been known by such distinguishing characteristics, applicable to the questions before us, that they require to be separately taken notice of; namely: the ministry of Mr. Fox; that of his surviving coadjutors; and the ministry now in power.

The ministry of Mr. Fox was composed of a coalition with several principal leading men who had acted with Mr. Pitt. Expectation was held out to the nation, that by this coalition party-spirit would be extinguished; and confidence was expressed, that the machinery of government would be capable of superior energy by this concentration of extraordinary political abilities. The consequences, on the contrary, which ought to have been apprehended, were, either, that from a multitude of sove-

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reign opinions in our councils, claiming deliberation and preference, the promptitude required for directing vigorous measures would be lost; or that the principles of some would be abandoned, and the talents of others would be lost, in the necessity of yielding to that person who should resolve to prevail. Thus there would soon be inaction or schism. Party-spirit would break out amongst them more violently than before; or, from such discordant principles being afloat, the ambition of men out of power would find an opportunity to seize the reins of government. Although the two coalition ministries passed too rapidly away for correct conclusions on those points, yet will these observations find a reasonable application in their dissolution.

The nation, willing patiently to try the new ministry of Mr. Fox, had regarded it with complacency. But it soon suspended the current of the favorite opinions of the public. They had been used to consider peace as impracticable; and they had also thought that it was wise to support Europe against France. Mr. Fox's friends, on the contrary, gave out that it was erroneous to suppose that peace was inconsistent with the present situation of France and views of her government; for that the same argument might be urged to prevent peace at all

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times. They also gave out, that peace was desirable, because our resistance to France had made her more powerful. The first of those positions stands proved to be not fairly conceived; and the other is not proved to be correct. That France is become more powerful, is true; but not by resistance. It can be said, and more certainly proved, that, without our resistance, she would have become infinitely more formidable, in a much shorter space of time, and would have had the opportunity of ravaging the world still more securely and ferociously.

These opposite sentiments of the nation did not prevent Mr. Fox from trying to negotiate peace with France; nor from declaring war against Prussia, who was at the same moment also pressed by France in the most hostile manner.

This experiment of negotiation, as has been mentioned, failed. Mr. Fox, for the sake of that negotiation, had made his choice of the office of foreign secretary of state, the summit of his ambition being to prove his consistency, by endeavouring to obtain peace, which he had so earnestly recommended at all times. He seems to have sincerely believed, as he had been told at Paris, that the temper of our preceding ministry was the obstacle against the desires of

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France for peace; and he now relied that the high personal estimation which the enemy had been eager to profess in his favor, would promote what was his object as much as they had pretended it to be theirs. In that respect he was hurried away by his feelings as a man; he did not embrace the enlarged reasoning of an enlightened statesman. He saw things as he wished them to be; not as they were. He did not examine the motives of France for continuing the war; and was led astray by dazzling conversations held with him at the Thuilleries. He fancied that a war, involving such high interests on the part of France and of her government, would be put a stop to at his nod! But, although his overtures were received with apparent civility, he found them to be evaded with chicanery; and he did not live to have the mortification of knowing the neglect with which his negotiators were treated at Paris, left without an answer, when that court, pursuing unerringly settled plans, abruptly departed from the seat of negotiation, in order to add Prussia to its conquests.

Mr. Fox's declaration of war against Prussia proved equally unhappy and impolitic. The dilemma in which France had placed Prussia had been notorious, by the publication of letters from the Prussian minister; and the hostile in-

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tentions of France were already apparent, since, under the pretence of friendly and equivalent exchanges, she had taken possession of some of her most valuable territories. Those palpable aggressions were evident forerunners of her more entire destruction. Mr. Fox, notwithstanding, embarrassed Prussia still more, by hostilities on the part of Britain. This short-sighted policy was quickly abandoned; for no sooner had France actually marched against Prussia, than it was found right, although now useless, to renew our friendship with this power. The original reason for war was weak: it was because she had taken possession of Hanover. She was known to have done so by the compulsion of France; and if we, in return, had been able to have annihilated Prussia, Hanover would not have been restored to us again, without the consent of France. Nor, as a point of honor, was there any credit to be gained in crushing an unavoidable instrument, when the prime mover stood confessed. It may be granted that Prussia merited her fate, and that we could not prevent it. These are not points of dispute. We might have protracted her ruin; we could have left open a better chance of assistance to her from her neighbours; and the direct object of the destroyer of nations might not have been so easily accomplished. It is

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only by perseverance, stubborn even under disasters, that the tide of his successes can be stemmed, in order to be turned.

Neither of those two great features in the ministry of Mr. Fox, was favorable to his pretensions as a statesman, nor calculated to gain the confidence which the nation had been really disposed to bestow.

It was not then known that Mr. Fox was the wise author of more creditable plans for his country's safety, directing the capture of the fleets of secondary powers, who could not protect them from being made the instruments of France to annoy us at her pleasure.

At this time, this country witnessed, what had not been hitherto seen during the king's reign, an opposition who did not advocate the cause of the enemy. Perhaps they are not entitled, in this, to any other merit than that of consistency with their opinions when in power; nor is it mentioned but as connected with the public spirit of the nation. From them there was no bias communicated in favor of the enemy, nor against ourselves. The nation, at the death of Mr. Fox, adhered to all its opinions respecting the necessity of submitting to be at war, but with a diminished confidence in government.

Mr. Fox being dead, his surviving coadjutors

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remained in office. This is the second ministry which was to be spoken of, and which proved to be as short, as it was inauspicious to themselves and to the country.

The reply to the propositions of peace made, at Paris, by their deceased colleague, was now only trumpeted forth to the world from the metropolis of Prussia. Here, at Berlin, said the French, shall we remain, until England shall give up her conquests. In other words, let England resign her conquests, and then we may perhaps inform her whether we shall condescend to treat with her or not. Any answer more gracious the nation would have been unprepared to receive.

Prussia being destroyed, still Russia remained to be attacked; and in the moment of her emergency, she earnestly solicited the British ministry to give her some indirect assistance, on any part of the continent, by an expedition which might occupy the attention of a portion of the French army; a respectable Swedish force being ready at the same time to co-operate in any manner which the ministry might choose; and she likewise solicited pecuniary aid, to support her own army. Neither of those requests was complied with, and her alliance with Britain availed her in no respect. She received only evasive answers, which, in their coldness and stately inanity,

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seemed to talk about something which there would be ample time to discuss years afterwards. That this supineness on the part of the government of Great Britain was a principal cause of the subsequent disasters of Russia, and that its accompanying indifference occasioned her enmity against this country, seems to be established. This neglect of Russia entails calamities innumerable, which this country may have long cause to rue.

Then, the continent was to be consigned to its fate, and we were passively to abide the consequences. But in what way did this ministry in other respects conduct the war?

A fleet was sent to Constantinople, under circumstances betraying great imbecility. It was to be a negotiating fleet; to be the bearer, to our ambassador, of verbose instructions, upon which months might have been required to come to a clear understanding with the Ottoman minister. It does not appear whether professional men advised that this fleet should be risked between the fortresses of the Dardanelles without the additional aid of land forces, and deemed that it was sufficiently powerful, without such assistance, for the purposes for which it was dispatched. The advice of professional men, if so given, will exonerate ministers on those points; but not for the expedition itself, re-

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specting the success of which nothing seems to have been concerted; their simple supposition only must have been, that this fleet would overawe the porte, and insure finally the success of our negotiation. But the fleet was glad to escape precipitately, without attaining its object; and the porte became, in consequence, more firmly swayed by France.

An expedition of a different nature proceeded to Egypt. It consisted of a considerable body of troops sent to take possession of Alexandria. This, too, may have been meant further to overawe the porte in the same negotiation. It failed, and in a more lamentable manner than that before Constantinople; for all the men, who were not slain, became prisoners of war.

In another part of the globe, an officer, employed by Mr. Pitt's ministry, had gone out of his way, without instructions, to attack and gain possession of the Spanish colony of Buenos Ayres; and it was no doubt right, in the ministry by whom his dispatches were received, to bring that officer to trial. He was found guilty by a court martial, yet barely reprimanded. The presumption arising from so slight a censure, which rendered the judgment virtually null, is, that the judges had inferred from the evidence adduced before them, that the ministry of Mr. Pitt would have approved the en-

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terprise. But could it be right that the new ministry should have publickly disapproved this conquest, while at the same time it deemed it expedient to send reinforcements for the very purpose of preserving the possession? The colony, in the meantime, was retaken from us by the Spaniards; but not before correct advices had been there circulated of the adverse sentiments of government with respect to the capture.

Another expedition set sail, for the purpose of again taking possession of the colony of Buenos Ayres. This, too, was attended with the usual ill fortune of ministry: it failed; owing to the unhappy choice of a commanding officer, whose abilities were inadequate to the object.

In the midst of these few impotent attempts, discouraging to the nation in the result, the ministry was amusing itself in speculative and philosophical projects of reform. Full, too, of vain conceit, it was enjoying its own dream of basking in the sunshine of popular favor, and even unguardedly testifying its confidence of being so secure in that favor, that his majesty could not supply, by others, the places which they filled, when the king was pleased to give them a dismissal.

In the history of the nation no instance can be produced like that of this ministry, where men have undertaken an interesting and import-

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ant task, confessedly arduous, and where they have so entirely failed from their own ineptitude. The fable of Phaeton was realized. Ambition is supposed to be generated in great souls; but here every thing was diminutive. The ministers seemed to be dead to the interests of the state, and alive only to some trifling symptoms of common activity, without system, without judgment, and almost without a plan. They despaired of the public weal, and, appalled by the aspect of the enemy, would have taught us to submit to any lot, as an irremediable misfortune. Their dismissal was therefore hailed by the nation with joy!

The present ministers were then selected by the king; and in contradistinction to their immediate predecessors in office, from whose combined abilities much unfounded expectation had been raised, they aspired to no merit but that of re-establishing as much as was now possible of Mr. Pitt's system of warfare, which they deemed to be the wisest, as well as that most congenial with the public sentiments. If this system had not before been fortunate, the departure from it, by the two late ministries, had been beyond calculation more fatal. In the former instance, the nation acted like men firm in necessary defence, and bold in assailing the enemy at every point within reach;

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undismayed by defeat, and knowing that, as existence was at stake, so the best resource was in the courage which hope inspires. In the two last ministries, on the contrary, the nation appeared to acknowledge inferiority, and bow before the genius of the enemy, soliciting mercy whilst he spurned us, and preparing only to wait the hour of submitting to the chains he was forging for us. It was high time to redeem the national character.

Russia proved to be already sacrificed. The new ministers had not been able to send her any of those aids which she had so long demanded in vain, nor could they restore to us her lost confidence, before she thought it necessary to yield to the enemy. She humbled herself still more; for she became a party in a league with the enemy to force upon us what he vaguely calls to the world a maritime peace.

The loss of a warlike and commercial ally, so powerful as Russia, was doubly disastrous when she avowed herself an enemy. We had no alternative left but to act with fortitude; and ministers accordingly prepared such possible means as the exigency required. In doing so, it has since been obvious to the whole nation, that they proceeded on a knowledge of other untoward events, which immediately afterwards became notorious.

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It has appeared that the league to force upon us the enemy's maritime peace, was not confined to Russia and France; but that those two powers engaged to make the rest of Europe join in proscribing us from all intercourse with them, until we should accept the yet unoffered terms of this peace. The head of the Russian empire was flattered with the distinction of emperor of the north, as chief of that part of the conspired confederacy consisting of northern powers who should exclude us from the Baltic. If we were to do no more than look aghast at such obnoxious projects, our exclusion from the continent would naturally be followed by attempts on the part of the continent to expel us even from our own territories.

The means adopted by the present ministers were various:

They were, to secure the Danish fleet, which lay ready at the command of Russia and France, either for the purpose of shutting up the Sound, for conveying troops to our island, or for forcing Sweden into the confederacy against us.

They were, to preserve, as long as possible, the friendship and alliance of Sweden.

They were, to furnish the means to the court of Portugal, of removing the seat of government to South America; where it is probable that we shall reap, by trading with those rich and

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extensive dominions, more solid benefits than were to be acquired by the splendor of conquering them.

They were, to maintain and augment respectable squadrons on every part of the coasts of Europe where the enemy could be annoyed; and to send troops, with a similar object, to the Mediterranean, where, also, an important trade was yet carried on by us with success.

And their measures were, to harrass the enemy, by preventing him, if possible, from having any trade, but that through us; of which we had been, for the present, decidedly deprived by his own most severe prohibitions.

Much as these vigorous measures are deserving of applause, still it is uncertain whether any great benefit can be derived from them, or from any others, which, at this late period, can be had recourse to, for the purpose of making any impression favorable to our cause as connected with the continent. For when preceding ministers had carelessly stood by, and allowed the two most powerful of the northern states to fall, our subsequent efforts are no longer gilded by former prospects of redeeming the continent; although they are, on that very account, more necessary in our manly resistance, to protect ourselves from ruin and slavery.

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While credit can be given to ministers for conducting the war abroad in a manner suited to the spirit of the public mind, it is melancholy to observe, on the other hand, that that spirit has been severely wounded by the bad management of affairs at home, and particularly in the transactions of parliament. To satisfy the public that war is conducted with energy, is due to the feelings of a brave nation; but it is equally necessary, for the spirit and honor of a free and independent people, that the powers which the nation delegates for the maintenance of the constitution in all its parts, should be exercised with decorum, and that the public servants should gain respect and veneration by their parliamentary conduct. That this is not the case in the present critical moment, attaches a culpability against ministers, which no deserts can palliate; while an equally reproachful stain affixes on the opposition.

The people were not indulging the hopeless expectation of replacing the two great characters who, for a length of years, had ruled their political opinions. Independently of the praise or blame of their respective measures, all men subscribed to the acknowledgment of the superior talents possessed by each. Mr. Pitt, as minister, was known by his capacious and disinterested mind, which embraced, and weighed

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with scrupulous anxiety, the complicated interests of his country; by his luminous display of his plans; by his candid and acute examination of objections; and by matchless eloquence, not less commanding than persuasive: accusation shrunk before his stern simplicity, and personality's barbs fell pointless. Mr. Fox, as leader of the opposition, was not less remarkable. He proved himself a profound logician, and consummate master of debate; quick, clear, and strong in perception, he seized the import and extent of every thing advanced either for or against his positions, and was ready to turn every expression or occurrence to advantage, urging new matter or suppressing it, as best suited his purpose, and even watching every momentary impression made on his auditors. Two men so eminently gifted, naturally monopolized and dispatched the great concerns of parliament, leaving to minor talents the drudgery of subordinate business.

Thus, the people out of doors were gratified by observing that public measures underwent full discussions, on the merits and demerits of the measures themselves, and that the speeches of their favorite orators came home to every man's bosom and understanding. The space which had been thus occupied by Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox, could not be soon filled up. Yet that

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a comparison with what these men were, should leave their successors, whether in ministry or in the opposition, at the distance where they stand, was equally unlooked for.

The character of parliament is changed. Business drags heavily; and when the people read the reports of parliamentary speeches, they observe that the houses sit sometimes through the whole night, and that the morning's sun finds them still engaged in discussion: but of what? Of personalities, of accusations, defences, retorts, and breaches of order.

If this war of words proceeded merely from inattention to the established forms of parliament, some blame might attach to the chair. But its jurisdiction in each house is limited to the preservation of forms alone; and it must be allowed that, in the exercise of this authority, great delicacy and discretion are evinced. There is not perhaps a more difficult task in human affairs than to hold, with judgment, the balance entrusted to the speaker, and to preserve, in a large body, the equipoise between order and confusion; between the strict conformity to rigid rules on one side; and, on the other, not merely the too apt propensity to infringe rules, but the privilege of an admitted latitude beyond rules which are almost undefineable, and are

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only applicable to cases themselves, as they accidentally arise. In proportion as members are insensible to the preservation of order, although they must yield in the end to authority, yet they can in the meanwhile occasion much waste of that time which ought not to be diverted from mature and solemn discussion.

The speaker's authority can administer no cure for the more substantial evils of which the public sees the existence in both houses.

Does the minister, to whose lot it falls to conduct business through the ordeal of the popular assembly, possess the personal ascendancy necessary for that purpose?

It is not enough, for that office, to have the soundest talents, to be a respectable lawyer, to have gained the most gentlemanly acquirements, and to be esteemed as a good man. All his qualifications will be disregarded, every measure he proposes will be subjected to scorn, unless he be master of presence of mind, inflexible firmness, and great dignity of deportment.

If he imagines that his adversaries are to be effectually opposed by candor, affability and condescension, he is mistaken; for superior and commanding talents are those required.

If, as a private member, he was happy in the use of personal sarcasm, he must be wary how

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he now allows this faculty to escape his lips, but as it may be subsidiary to something important.

The most difficult of his tasks is, to learn the art of not retorting personalities, unless with the most guarded acuteness and delicacy, and when he is sure of producing a proper effect.

Above all, it is his duty to resist every motion, from whatever quarter of the house made, which he does not deem to be justified on urgent public grounds; otherwise he will encourage a most prolific source of intemperate and protractive abuse, which may disgrace and impede parliamentary proceedings.

The present opposition took their seats under the flattering confidence that the majority of the house would restore them to the service of the king. Frustrated in their violent struggles to attain this end, has not their testiness made them forget what is due to themselves and to the public?

In order to search into this inquiry, let the printed reports be followed. If they are incorrect, it is lamentable that the nation should have entertained unfavorable impressions from sources of false information.

It seems right to begin by noticing the debates which arraigned the conduct of ministers on the most prominent measures of war. The

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opposition imputed to ministers four measures, as betraying want of capacity and judgment. Without arguing the questions which arose respecting them, it is meant only to recite, with precision, the substance of what was advanced on both sides, in order to show the nature of the discussions, as well as of the spirit which reigned in them.

The measures impugned were these:

The War with Russia.

The Refusing the Mediation of Russia.

The Capturing the Danish Fleet.

And the Issuing the Orders of Council, which retaliated the French decrees, prohibiting all trade with Britain.

The war with Russia was admitted, both by ministers and the opposition, to be a calamitous event. To what cause was that to be attributed? Ministers remarked, that their predecessors, by withholding the aids which Russia had so earnestly demanded, rendered her unable to cope longer with France, and drove her to the necessity of submitting to the treaties of Tilsit, by which it was proved that she engaged to join in banishing us from the continent. The opposition, on the contrary, contended, that there could be no stipulations in the treaty of Tilsit hostile to us; and why? because France and Russia said so. They contended, that it was by

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our having captured the Danish fleet, that we created the enmity of Russia; and why? because that was the reason assigned by France and Russia, also.

Russia and France both said, that we had refused the mediation of Russia to obtain peace between Great Britain and France; and this assertion, contradicted by every appearance and fact, was made matter of arraignment. Ministry justified themselves by producing proofs of their desire to negotiate for peace, through Russia, and through Austria, in any manner becoming this country; and likewise proofs that they never could procure, in any quarter, an answer.

The capture of the Danish fleet was impugned as disgraceful to England; and why? because Denmark and France both cry out against it, as unnecessary and unjust. Ministers and the opposition were agreed on the principle of the necessity of such captures in self-defence; and ministers defended this measure by adducing the former acknowledgment of Denmark, that she was not independent; and they appealed to common sense, whether all the views of France did not necessarily tend to make a convenient instrument of Denmark; urging, at the same time, their own knowledge of the secret treaty of Tilsit, which was to force Denmark to join with the rest of the continent against us.

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The orders of council are scarcely even yet understood in parliament. On this subject, also, the opposition adopted the declamatory language of the French newspapers, that by those orders we were ourselves producing the effect which France desired, by ruining our own commerce. Ministers answered, that our commerce with Europe was already obstructed by France, as much as France could obstruct it; for her decrees against it are well known to have been most rigidly executed; that no commerce with Europe existed for us, except that degree of contraband trade which France could not prevent; that, therefore, we never could have less trade with the continent under the orders of council; that the effect of those orders would be rather to produce more trade to us; and that, at any rate, since France endeavours to force upon us her maritime peace, by making even the seas useless to us, and subservient to her, it is our supreme duty to exert the powerful means we possess of maintaining our authority; and, finally, that although ministers well know how to estimate the comparative value of North American friendship, yet if America was to resist our measures of immediate self-preservation, we still were bound to abide by the consequences of enforcing them.

The reflections which suggest themselves on perusing these charges made by the opposition,

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are, that they are precisely those views of the several subjects which France has represented, for her own purposes. The opposition are not to be precluded, it is true, from taking hints, if they are to be found, for the benefit of their country, even from the enemy. But is France likely to furnish such hints? On the contrary, it is to be presumed that the system of accusation which France studiously maintains against our ministers, is drawn from those operations which have been in the greatest degree hostile to her wishes and designs; and which operations therefore deserve, on the contrary, from ourselves the highest commendation. If no suspicion entered the breasts of the opposition, that France had thrown out, for a lure, those very charges; if they discovered no mischief to be hidden under the adoption of them; could they not at least observe that they would themselves betray great poverty of talent in being simple echoes of France in their principal attacks against ministry? The points of declamation made use of by the enemy ought to be looked on with suspicion, because it is clear that the sentiments which she wishes us to imbibe must be those which are favorable to her ends.

The opposition have been pertinaciously zealous in behalf of France, respecting a measure of government of a different tendency, regarding a simple

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regulation of trade in the article of Peruvian bark. Heretofore we had been accustomed to receive from Spain a portion of this article for our own consumption, dealt out to us in common with other nations. But recently we have been enabled to import from Peru, the place of its growth, a quantity so considerable, that the other nations of Europe are now looking to us to supply their wants. In the desire of gain, we were, too improvidently, ready to part with all this bark, when the attention of government was attracted to the consideration of the subject, by a circumstance which does not appear to be sufficiently understood by the public. Notwithstanding the infuriated decrees of France interdicting all commerce with us, and banishing our manufactures, she has been issuing licenses, authorising the importation of Peruvian bark from England. The singularity of these licenses led our government to examine the consequences of depriving ourselves of an article, which was known to be as essential an ingredient, in medicine, to restore health, as corn is admitted to be a necessary production for the sustenance of mankind; and which we are, therefore, as little able to dispense with the want of as the French, or any other foreign nation. If it had been produced at home, or in our colonies, it would have been long since subjected to restric-

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tions, analogous to those adopted with respect to corn, in order that we might not be exposed to the evil of being deprived of a supply so essential to our welfare. In the consultations which were resorted to by government, it was found that, notwithstanding the large quantity of bark at present here, we are yet uncertain when more may arrive; that if France, or any other nation, obtained from us the bark which we hold, it would not be restored to us, however pressing our own wants might subsequently turn out; and that, therefore, in place of allowing an unlimited exportation, we ought to keep a superintending eye upon it. Our government, then, reserving this necessary precaution in its own power, and without stopping to debate the policy of refusing the article to the enemy, declared at once to France, that she is welcome to partake of our supply, on a condition the most simple and easy; namely: that she will include in her special licenses for that article, a certain moderate quantity of our manufactures, or colonial produce, of which France stands equally in need. In this regulation there is nothing harsh nor unreasonable on our part; nor any thing with which France cannot comply with facility. The blame which would seem to attach against ministers, is rather for having hitherto so readily conceded to the wishes and

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wants of the enemy, than for withholding the supply. The opposition complain on a very different ground. They invent the supposition, that we are entirely withholding bark from France, and that thus we are depriving the bed of sickness of so important a remedy, making war on their hospitals, and engendering pestilence and plague; and that we are, therefore, inhumane! The French themselves, in their inveterate hostility against our trade, may haughtily reject our boon, as they would reject a peace not dictated by themselves; and if they do, is it us who are depriving them of this salutary medicine? Is it we who refuse it, or they themselves? Are we imposing any condition which impedes them from the certainty of obtaining it? On the contrary, have we not opened the doors of our market wide, that they may become purchasers on reasonable terms? Where, then, is the denounced inhumanity? In this country, when any men appear in public, and pretend to have a greater share of sensibility than that which is distinguishable in others, it may reasonably be suspected that their own pretensions are disputable. What good purpose can be attained by such unwarrantable appeals to the passions, thus holding up the government of our own country as an object of detestation, and a powerful foe as suf-

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fering piteously by our oppression? Let it be granted that the opposition intend no harm; but do they not effect it? In such attacks on ministers, are they not fighting the cause of the enemy? On every occasion, there appears a disposition to neglect our public spirit.

On discussing not those subjects alone, but all other topics, the opposition have further hurt themselves, in general estimation, by a novelty of manner in their proceedings, not calculated to forward the business of the nation to advantage. They appear to have no ostensible leader, through whom a broad principle can be avowed to justify a general line of conduct; they seem to have concerted nothing together for the arrangements of their attacks against ministers. Particular topics, indeed, for discussion have been assigned to different men, but no assistance appears to have been given them for the digestion of their crude ideas; and debates appear to have been carried on, as if it had been expected that every individual should speak as long as he could, and as often as he could, and that he should introduce as many motions as possible.

But ministers, as well as the opposition, are implicated in another charge. In every discussion, the least part of the time of the house has been occupied with the real business brought forward. Arguments have been drawn much

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less from the merits and demerits of the measures themselves, than from the merits and demerits of the opposing orators. Parliament has been entreated to adopt or reject measures, because such and such men had adopted or rejected them. Thus, almost every speech has diverged into personalities; and the nation, while listening for information respecting the projects of the enemy, and our means of resistance, has been disgusted to hear details of criminations and exculpations of the past transactions of public men, involving no responsibility, and in which it has in vain tried to seek excusable motives for dwelling on or for divulging them. The nation has only learnt, that, in the heat of debate, one member, whose talents had stood very high, was now to be rated very low, whilst some other member was raised into notice in a contrary proportion; or that two contending orators drew comparisons between themselves, each complacently in his own favor!

What good purpose has been attained by the disclosure of all the disastrous details of our diplomatic secrets? Could France have desired other documents, in order to represent our government in a more ridiculous light to her vassals?

Have those publications been made, because the opposition do not allow with impunity that

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any impeachment, even in argument, shall be laid against their conduct when in office? because every disparaging reflection produces questions, replies, and rejoinders; and demands, without end, are made for volumes of papers, to be printed for their justification? And is it because ministers knowing, that men, ridiculously tenacious in personal defence, prejudice themselves by such conduct in the estimation of others, that they therefore allow them to work their own condemnation?

To an irksome and unprofitable waste of valuable time thus produced, may be added an improvident expenditure of money. It is not improbable, that, at the end of the present session, the expense of printing papers, not for the public service, may amount to the enormous sum of fifty thousand pounds!

The most serious consideration is, whether the constitution be not liable to be undermined by a conduct so disreputable to parliament? If representatives meet for the purpose of canvassing, abstractedly, the merits and demerits of each other, the immediately urgent and important business of the nation cannot be attended to as it ought to be.

To descend to circumstances of another description, it is curious to remark, too, the changes in habits which have taken place. For instance,

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we may perceive one man, who, when acting with Mr. Pitt, was classed as the most subtle reasoner in the house, now condescend to be known as a sporter of witticisms. In proposing a measure, the most important, and of the nicest bearings, which ever occupied attention, his whole speech was studied to entrap laughter, being composed of a tissue of jests and pleasantries, to obtain which, he was not ashamed to show that he had consulted even the facetious Mr. Miller. Another member, who formerly kept within the bounds prescribed to him by Mr. Fox, now thinks himself entitled to constant attention, because he can stand on the floor, with confidence, and declare, that he believes nothing which he hears, and that he has opinions different from every one else; although his own opinions may be unsanctioned but in his breast, and his beliefs may rest in his own bold assertions.

Under such tuition, and with such examples, the conduct of new members may be readily surmised. Each fancies himself endowed with eloquence, and therefore rises to express his opinion, although no greater degree of instruction should be conveyed, than the house had been accustomed to learn from unassuming silent votes. Did not a new member, for example, request the attention of the house, during a tedi-

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ous length of time, with a prepared speech on a threadbare topic, showing that he had memory to recapitulate dryly all that had been already advanced by others, and on a subject which had been already disposed of?

Can it be supposed, that, for want of better means of contest, the opposition seem desirous to overpower ministers by comparative exertion of physical strength? When they so frequently contrive, by dint of numbers of orators, to eke out speech after speech, without new matter, until morning, is it because they can retire to rest themselves during the day, and know that ministers, instead of necessary repose, to recruit their strength, must keep awake to give their attention to public concerns?

Opposition formally disclaim the intention of impeding the business of government. But do they not know whether they have really impeded it or not?

All parliamentary proceedings not justifiable, might have been stopped in the outset, had ministers performed their duty, with firmness, in resisting the first example of irregularity. It was a strong case. When it happened, the house of commons was blinded by curiosity, and listened, instead of imposing silence. That impression being forgotten, it may now be reverted to, for future instruction.

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A right honorable member, who had been dismissed from office by his majesty, is represented, in the reports, to have claimed, by a formal notice, the attention of the house, in vindication of his character against newspaper misrepresentations.

The house ought, in the first instance, to have felt that it was not the guardian of an ex-minister's character; that it had nothing to do with newspaper misrepresentations which did not violate its own privileges; and that it did not fall within its province to take cognizance of the dismissal by the king of any of his servants, unless there was an accusation to be brought against the king for having injured the interests of the state in the exercise of that prerogative.

If the house had consulted its own dignity, as well as what was due to the king, it would have confined itself to inquire, whether there were any grounds to imply an abuse of the prerogative? The answer being in the negative, it would have refused to occupy its attention with this extraneous matter. The right honorable member should have been left to his remedy, where it might be competent; and if he had still insisted to be heard, he should have been told, that in desiring to trouble the house with his injuries, he was equally presumptuous with the French consul, who had required that we

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should make new laws for the punishment of his libellers.

Not only was this language not held on the part of the house, but even the king's new ministers consented that his majesty should become a party in telling, through them, his own tale, in competition with his late servant. Never was a more unconstitutional step taken; never before were the prerogative and the dignity of the crown so sacrificed. A precedent was thus made, wherein the king, without being requested by either of the other branches of the legislature, and not amenable to any tribunal, levelled himself with a servant, and assigned the motives of his conduct, when his august privileges would have been best supported by silence. This was the more strange, because the king, at the very same moment, was exerting himself to preserve what was ever deemed by him an essential pillar of the constitution.

If any thing could add to the sorrowful sensations excited by this fatal mistake of ministers, it was, that, besides being wrong, it was superfluous. For the irregular curiosity of the house was gratified, and the right honorable member obtained the satisfaction which he had himself requested, by stating in his place what he had to say in contradiction to the reports of newspapers; yet, instead of the justification which

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he sought for, he may be fairly supposed to have imprinted ideas of an opposite tendency.

From his speech, and the concomitant facts he referred to, inferences were drawn which did not raise him in the estimation of the public as a statesman and man of business; for it showed, that in agitating a question respecting the catholic religion, and therefore a measure of importance, affecting the letter and spirit of the constitution and the king's coronation oath, and likewise the habits and prejudices of the people, he did not seem to have digested any regular plan, nor provided against natural objections; nor did he seem careful about the result, either when his measure had been before the cabinet, or when it had been the subject of correspondence with the viceroy in Ireland, or when it had been brought forward in the house of commons.

In the cabinet, this question of magnitude appeared to have been introduced by him in terms admitting of ambiguity. He obtained the royal, reluctant assent; and, on being told by his colleagues, that it was impossible that this could have been granted but to the most limited construction of the question, he did not, notwithstanding, condescend again to communicate with his master on the subject; although, in the diligent and faithful attention to his duty, for which he took marked credit, he was in the

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daily practice of transacting business with the king. In place of the natural and respectful methods of explanation with his majesty, of which he had the means, what did he do? He took occasion, in writing a dispatch to the government of Ireland, to state, that the sense of an unseceding part of the cabinet was in favor of the most extensive construction of the question. Although this dispatch was contrary to the sentiments of the king, which might be supposed to be still vibrating in his ears, and which sentiments had been declared to preceding ministers on occasions not forgotten by the nation, yet was the dispatch transmitted to the king, for his perusal, introduced amongst other papers, and without a comment or reference to his majesty's former assent. If the right honorable member had set his ministerial thirst for sway at issue with the conscience of the king, he could not have taken a more extraordinary mode than this, of attempting to obtain, by surprise or by force, a measure which was not otherwise to be carried. Of such conduct, it was easy to anticipate that his majesty would take notice by the highest mark of his displeasure.

In his correspondence with Ireland, the right honorable member was also at fault. Some discontents were reported to have taken place in a district of that kingdom; and, in order to

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suppress them, he seemed to have had recourse to one of the undigested theories which had long served him as subjects of public declamation; and, without investigating whether it was a suitable remedy for partial discontents, his measure was offered to Ireland at large. The proposal was received in Dublin with suspicion; for it was singular that a measure, the obstacles against which were known throughout all his majesty's dominions, should have been offered at a moment when it was not expected, and brought forward as a remedy for new grievances. In Ireland, as in the cabinet here, the two constructions of which the proposed measure was susceptible, presented themselves as requiring explanation; and this being asked for, it was resolved to give the answer contained in the dispatch which had been so unceremoniously transmitted to the king's hands.

In the house of commons the project had already attracted attention by the mysterious inconsistency which had attended its promulgation. At first, its author had given notice of simply and unobtrusively introducing his intended measure under the shelter of a new clause in the mutiny bill. Then he withdrew that notice, and began, instead, to hurry precipitately through the house a new act. The completion of this second intention was, notwithstanding,

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put off; and it at last appeared, that the measure, which, from its importance and urgency, was represented to require instantaneous attention, was, on some new pretence, to have been abandoned altogether, had ministers been allowed to remain in office.

What were the misrepresentations of newspapers which were to have been refuted, it is of no consequence to inquire. Newspaper animadversions are forgotten almost as soon as published, whilst parliamentary proceedings remain recorded for ages; and with these will be transmitted to posterity, those impressions regarding this ex-minister, which he was himself the cause of exciting. That he should not have perceived this effect, or that he should have disregarded it, could only have been produced by the circumstance of his mind being absorbed in the contemplation of other objects which he deemed of more importance. These were believed to be, not merely sensations arising from his dismissal from office, but the expectation of being reinstated; for it was observed, that in the delivery of this speech of explanation he affected to be calm, but could not conceal his agitation; and that although his words were humble, he betrayed the most marked satisfaction, not doubting that he possessed the confidence of the house.

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His friends felt themselves vainly encouraged, from the ill-advised conduct of ministers, in an affair so delicate with regard to the king, to propose votes of censure against the crown; abstract resolutions, and arbitrary conclusions from partial premises, were proposed to the house; and thus originated the present fermentation of party-spirit; which, if not checked, is likely to increase until it shall contaminate the whole spirit of the nation. The enemy must, of course, feel high gratification in observing that our public men, unconscious of the services they are thus rendering him, should employ themselves, as he wishes them to be employed, in personal invectives.

The other house of parliament is so exact a counterpart of the house of commons, that examples of what has passed in this may suffice for the nature of the proceedings of both. It might be expected that in the upper house, from the circumstance alone of being composed of a much smaller body, there would be preserved a greater degree of propriety, and that the pride of nobility would guard itself in etiquette against unbecoming personalities. Humiliating instances to the contrary, must, therefore, be more keenly felt in this country, and be more gratefully acceptable to the enemy.

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Thus is the series completed of those leading facts, by which it was proposed to be demonstrated that the spirit of the nation has been, throughout the war in which we are engaged, dangerously assailed by the active intrigues of France on the public mind; and that we are become more exposed to similar attacks, from unfavorable changes in the principles of our political character. It only remains to make the brief statement of these dangers as they apply to the circumstances of the present moment.

It seems certain, that however contrary to the expectations of the nation the unfavorable events of the war had proved, and however our disappointments had been regretted, yet were our sensations accompanied with the impression, that the reverses of the war could not have been remedied by ourselves, that we were acting right, and that we were deserving of better fortune; and thus at least was the laudable public spirit preserved unbroken. It was not until the time of the coalition ministries that the first wound on this spirit was inflicted.

Then, for the first time, to the regret of failure was added the dreadful mortification of self-accusation, in being contributors, by our inactive abandonment of Prussia and Russia, to the entire ruin of one of those powers, and to the sub-

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jugation of the other; and, by both events, to the then sudden accomplishment of the plans of France for excluding us from the continent. This was felt with the aggravated and humiliating consciousness of having deserved the reproaches of Europe. When Russia, dreading the misfortunes which were soon to overwhelm her, and piqued at the inactivity of our ministers, had reminded us that she had entered into the war as our ally, and was told coldly in return, that it was now become a war of her own, what feelings could she afterwards entertain respecting this country? How must we have degraded ourselves in her eyes! In the violent shock of active war, nations can admire the energies which are directed against themselves; but neglect from a professed friend, whose aid had been relied on when most needed, is not to be forgotten nor forgiven. Our national character can never be retrieved in the estimation of Russia and of the world, from the degradation to which it has been subjected by this conduct of our ministers.

The present ministry might have been able to restore to us our own good opinion, by again trying to extend powerful assistance to the continent. But the more hopeless they may have found the situation of the continent to be, it is the more necessary that we should respect

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and cherish our public spirit. If it were no longer called for on behalf of others, still it is the only spring to exertions in our own cause.

Therefore it is that melancholy reflections are produced, in finding, that notwithstanding the meritorious vigor which our present ministry opposes against the warlike preparations of the enemy, it possesses an imbecility of character, on the other hand, which prevents it from conducting the affairs of parliament with the necessary energy, and from being able to impress, with effect, on the national representatives the sense of our critical perils. It is equally vexatious to observe that the opposition, amidst their selfish pursuits, appear to rest satisfied with adopting carelessly as their own, the declamations of crafty France. Both ministers and the opposition join to crown those evils by being absorbed in party-spirit. Does it not follow that the nation at large, seeing such examples of degeneracy, can scarcely feel a greater degree of anxiety than is shown in the public councils, and that the patriotic ardor will give way to a fatal indifference as to the future lot of our country?

This is the advantage which France at present hopes and seeks to obtain. The state of abandonment of ourselves, toward which she sees us to be verging, is that which is most likely to

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make her expect in us for an increase of her list of dependent nations. In neglecting longer our own patriotic energies, we shall certainly dread her power; and by reducing ourselves to apathy and despair, we shall become her passive slaves. Such is the progress of falsehood to our country.

Sovereign over the continent as France now deems herself securely to be, and maintaining stedfastly her views for the subversion of England, her sentiments may be readily conceived. Knowing that her assumed confidence had always been a principal means of filling her own armies with blind impetuosity, and of infusing diffidence into those of her enemies, she looks toward us with an affected air of careless superiority; endeavouring to depreciate, in our own estimation, every warlike exertion of which we are capable; and adroitly disseminating amongst us the idea that it would therefore be good policy to procure peace. She at the same time tantalizingly sports with our natural wishes for peace, whilst she is thereby leading us to a supineness of public spirit as to the necessity of continuing the war. She holds out to us, indirectly, a wish for peace on her own part; but this, without ever disappearing, constantly eludes our grasp.

With those views, and in that deceitful tone, France insidiously asks what object England

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proposes to gain by continuing at war? It is in vain that we answer that we have no object, except that which she would make us despise, which we, nevertheless, appreciate most highly; namely: self-preservation; and that we have not chosen war, nor can we at present command peace.

She goes on, not to offer peace to us, but to appeal to all the world whether she is not desirous of peace; and whenever our government has used endeavours to bring this assurance to the test, it is her study to make the world still believe that she cannot persuade our government to treat with her. That she should be able to deceive the continent in that respect, is not to be wondered at, since on the continent there is no general dissemination of opinions but those which she is herself pleased to circulate through her abject press: but that her inconsistency, so slightly veiled, should find believers in this country, proves a bias in her favor which can scarcely be expected to yield to reason.

Yet so perverse is man, that from the conduct of France, when eluding the overtures of peace made by Mr. Fox, arguments have been attempted to be drawn for proving her disposition to enter into reasonable terms. Those overtures are allowed by all parties to have been as sin-

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cere and zealous on the part of our government, as they were simple and easily to be dispatched. The conduct of France, in laying them aside at the end of five months, proved incontestably what her intentions had always been; yet have intermediate conversations, which took place, been resorted to, in order to set the artful words of France in competition with the evidence of her actions. Thus, during that lengthened negotiation, she often seemed to be ready to agree to our plain proposals, although she as often evaded bringing them to issue; she even affected to be ready to grant our desired right to interfere in the politics of the continent, although it is evident that no affectation could be more extravagant, since she had before denied to us, during peace, that right, and was become in a condition more confidently to keep it from us now; in that respect, and in others, she appeared repeatedly to commit herself, although she always did so in a partial and insufficient manner, and retracted every promise she had made, by refusing at all periods to come to any explicit or binding understanding. On no better authority than words, calculated to amuse, and contradicted by accompanying acts, the nation has been told, that France was disposed for a reasonable peace!

In a similar manner, France asks triumph-

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antly, whether we have ever found her proposing conditions which we ought not to accede to? This, like the rest of her questions, being intended for the populace, she hopes that, unaccompanied by the affirmative answer, it may leave some impression in her favor. There is only one condition which she ever decisively proposed: let that speak for itself. In the prosecution of aggrandisement, she had been accustomed to offer to some powers, indemnifications for certain territories which she was pleased to appropriate to herself; and to purchase the friendship or neutrality of others, by proposing to give to them portions of the dominions of their neighbours, if not entire kingdoms. Such offers were first made to different German states, then to Austria, afterwards to Prussia and Russia; and even to Denmark it was proposed to receive the acquisition of the kingdom of Sweden, while to Sweden the offer was made of the surrender of the kingdom of Denmark. In the same spirit, France said to this country, that if we would be friendly to her while she ravaged the continent at pleasure, she was ready to agree that we might acquire, beyond the seas, such conquests as should be stipulated: that is, that we should tie ourselves down not to interfere with any of her measures, and also not to use our own maritime power but in proportion as

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France should permit! Were such conditions fit to be acceded to by an independent people, who respect themselves? But not only have such degrading conditions been offered, they have even been attempted to be forced upon us. It has been shown, that, during the peace of Amiens, France continued to increase her dominions, and to exclude from thence our trade, and was also taking means to interfere with and to destroy our power. What, then, at this present period, are the unknown conditions likely to be, which she endeavours to force upon us by her league of Tilsit?

France, ever continuing her appeal to the world, says, that we are ruining ourselves by that war which she is desirous of putting an end to. To so kind a remark from an enemy, our answer is, that if ruin is to overtake us, better is it to succumb with honor in the noble struggle, than to allow our ruin to be tyrannically effected by France to our dishonor. We do not fight for the bare honor of fighting; but in order to keep, by our bravery, that existence, and that proud rank amongst nations, which she is prepared to take from us, if we should credulously yield to her. The very pains which France uses to infuse into us the sentiments most accordant with her wishes, prove that we are at a great distance from that desperate situa-

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tion which she would inspire us with the dread of.

France, however, finds friends even in this country, who, pursuing her ideas, employ their time in writing common-place sentences against the evils of war, and in exhorting us to make peace. How superfluous and unavailing! Let discourses of that tendency be composed for France, on whom peace or war depends; with us they should be a waste of declamation.

In place of listening to the artful language of France, let us exercise our reason. It is obviously her interest to endeavour, as she does, to throw on Great Britain the odium of continuing the war, and of declining to make peace. It is, on the contrary, our business to ask, what is the object of France in continuing the war? Her object is proved to be, to extend that dominion over us which she has already, and unfortunately for the world, gained over the continent. If that be not the fact, and if, on the other hand, it was her desire to treat for any peace, deemed honorable or safe for England, would she not offer it; would she not obtain it from us? Most certainly she would. The world has witnessed that she can express herself laconically, and dispatch important business with the stroke of a pen, when she pleases: if she assume unusual and reserved ceremony

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with England, it is because she is determined to keep amity at a distance.

The fact stands recorded, that we have solicited peace from France herself; to no purpose. We have likewise solicited, through Russia and through Austria, to treat in any manner in which a treaty could be entered into with effect; but we have obtained no answer. Yet does France disdainfully publish to the world insulting answers, studiously intended for our observation, from Berlin; and she likewise forms leagues at Tilsit for forcing us to accept some peace or other called a maritime peace, the terms of which she is careful neither to offer nor to communicate to us. These acts of France, so strongly corroborative of the whole conduct which she has been proved to pursue systematically toward this country, are too plain to be misunderstood. No detached words of her own, susceptible of an opposite construction, and thrown out for her occasional purposes, no sophistry of party, can avail to persuade that the intentions of France are less hostile than the inveterate spirit which those acts betray.

But if the government of France could be even supposed to wish for peace with England, dares it allow to itself that gratification, circumstanced as it is? Dares that new government to withdraw its immense armies from foreign

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countries within the bosom of France? Will it dare to allow England to have any intercourse with the continent? Unfortunately for us, negative answers must be given; for the new government of France feels, by proud experience, that it is daily establishing and acquiring strength by its present system of war, with which it has reason to be satisfied; nor is it natural that it should desire to adopt any change, since by every change it must deem itself to incur new risks of being overturned. It is in reality dependent for its existence at present, upon war. France, at the beginning of the revolution, depended upon the success of its armies; now, on the contrary, the armies are dependent upon the earned fame and tried success of the government, which they, for their own sakes, support. The government, therefore, possesses in its armies able and zealous defenders. If they were no longer to be fostered as they now are; if they were to suffer neglect in the least degree; if any other interest should be allowed to interfere with them; for instance, the interest of commerce generally, or of England only, would not the armies be jealous and discontented? Is it likely that their government would expose this to hazard? The new government of France is, then, obliged to be the secret advocate of that prolongation of war which despondency terms

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perpetual, and which we cannot at present avert.

When may we flatter ourselves with the prospect of peace? Never, by probable calculations, and without the intervention of unforeseen events, until the new government of France shall have attained to more mature stability in the growth of her present generation, and until the present spirit of her armies shall have been gradually relaxed, and their numbers greatly diminished. Then may that new government be expected to reconcile itself to the belief of being safe in taking the repose of peace, and allowing her officers to enjoy their plunder and their new titles of distinction, and then there will no longer appear to exist the necessity of continuing an unprofitable war against England. Before that desireable period shall arrive, some years may elapse, in which the exertion of all our faculties will yet be required.

In the consequences, we have nothing reasonably to apprehend, unless from ourselves. It is scarcely possible that France can give more effect to her enmity against us, than she has already accomplished. She has used her utmost endeavours for the destruction of our trade, and any projected hostile attacks against us in other respects we can repel with a daily increased strength. For, whilst France has been, notwith-

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standing accessions of power, suffering a material decrease of her naval strength, with which alone she could execute any of the hostile plans she is so well disposed to put in practice; we, far from having sustained intrinsic losses of any sort, have acquired, since the beginning of her revolution, nearly twofold the resources which we before enjoyed, whether in population, riches, or a disciplined navy and army. Even our national debt, which has been no less an object of apprehension to ourselves, than it has been of hope to the enemy, is now, by the means of a revenue which opens sources more and more fertile every succeeding hour, and by the operation of grand arrangements for its liquidation, progressively meeting at that point in which the appropriated surpluses will be equal to, and soon greatly exceed our yearly augmentation of war-expenditure; so that our debt may be said already to have arrived at its greatest amount, and must now begin its rapid course of diminution. This true sketch of our different resources ought to inspire us with just confidence to continue the exertions which France compels us to make; and which, in spite of all apprehensions, it must be confessed, have hitherto, in the general result, redounded to the advantage of the nation.

In this view of things, given as they are believed to exist, there is no acrimonious intention

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of exciting malevolent feelings against France. The system pursued by her has been plainly and without exaggeration exposed, for the important purpose of animating the public spirit, and putting the nation on its guard against her present plans. Peace not being at our call, but in her option, we may, therefore, be obliged for many years yet to come to wage against her a war of defence. France is ardent, powerful, and enterprising; and we, too, are bold, strong, and amply provided with means both of safeguard and annoyance. If we should, notwithstanding, be subdued, it will not have been by open hostilities; we shall have been ruined by our own faults alone; by the corruption and passive weakness of that public spirit which France never fails to assail in every direction, and which finds itself, in the midst of her seductive arts, like a bark opposed to an impetuous tide, where it can be effectually preserved by the incessant use of the stemming oars; but, in the unguarded relaxation of a moment, is precipitated to destruction.

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